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production and distribution and making it, for the first time since its inception, self-supporting. Editor Kickboy even began receiving a salary of $200 a month.

Events on the club front, meanwhile, were affecting *Slash*'s subjects — and therefore its own fate. When the Masque was closed down in early '79 by the police and fire departments, bands had a hard time finding places to play. *Slash* almost had no scene to report on. A few clubs timidly tested some of the punkers on their stages with catastrophic results to the fittings and fixtures. Bouncers were confused, often pummeling innocent pogoers, and bartenders were irked since the punks hid in the restrooms guzzling from brown paper bags. Kickboy felt as if he'd gone establishment if he didn't get kicked out of the Whisky for smuggling in a pint. The Elks Lodge riot during that period and the Troubadour trashing at a Bags/Plugz gig closed the lid on nightclub punking for quite a while. Local club-

owners tried booking some rockabilly imitators spawned by the English craze, but the fad died fast locally.

Then Paul Greenstein, impresario around town, discovered Madame Wong's, although after a few broken chairs punks were forever banned. The Hong Kong Cafe, grateful for the crowds, became the hub of the punk action, and rowdy audiences doused each other with soy sauce.

Despite the Chinatown coup, only Mme. Wong and M. Kong were making any money. Except for the Dickies (who did well only in England), no local hardcore punk band had snagged a record deal. Distribution and sales of independent labels were painfully small, and the only radio airplay was on shows like Rodney Bingenheimer's, Richard Meltzer's and college stations. It became impossible to eke out a living as a punk rocker in L.A. Feuds broke out, and bands broke up. A defiant Kickboy wrote some songs himself and began singing with Catholic Discipline.

Diehard producers of L.A. punk music tried another tactic. Cheaply produced LPs were more readily accepted by distributors than the endless string of 45s, and albums like *F-Word* and compilations like *Yes L.A.*, *Tooth And Nail* and *Beach Boulevard* showed up on the record racks. Bob Biggs hired a business manager to help run *Slash* and channeled his energy into starting a record label called (what else?) Slash Records. The first LP, *Germs GI*, was released in October 1979. William Friedkin, director of *The Exorcist*, declared it his favorite recording and invited the Germs to do a song for his gay/sado/maso murder movie *Cruising*.

One day a telephone repairman came to the *Slash* office, looked at the name on the door and the mess inside and asked, "What is this, some kind of knife-fighting magazine?" The place looked like a recycling center for Colt 45 cans. Claude and Philomena, commuting in a crumpled car from Venice to Hollywood, sometimes slept on the floor for three or four days at a stretch when production deadlines rolled around. As they drifted off into dreamland, they'd tell one another, "Any day now *Slash* is going to make it..." *Slash*'s other two founders, though, got tired of waiting. Melanie Nissen went off to be a freelance photographer and occasionally contributes to *Slash*. Samiof's *Stuff* magazine became a big success on the L.A. art circuit and spawned imitations in other cities, and he is now dealing art as well.

By the beginning of 1980, most of L.A.'s original punk bands had split up, and the magnetic energy that had drawn such unlikely groups of people together dissipated. Musical fads such as ska came and went, and bands splintered into factions: art bands, pop/punk, gothic/reggae. With the death of disco, the nightclub boom began, and bands got bookings in new clubs all over town. A hard-core punk scene evolved in the beach cities, and the bands that surfaced like Black Flag, Circle Jerks and Mad Society (featuring a nine-year-old lead singer) were as full of rage as those in the 1977 English explosion. Beach punk brawls became as much a part of the action as skinhead violence, and police raids always topped the bill. Mohawks, headbands, kilts and chains were the uniforms of the youth war.

In May 1980, Slash Records signed one of L.A.'s most popular and persevering punk bands, X, and released their LP *Los Angeles*. Unprepared for the great response to the album, the staff had to revamp its operations to deal with the demand for the record. *Slash* magazine was holding its ground, but Kickboy thought the monthly issues were beginning to sound like Black Muslim or Watchtower propaganda sheets. A decision was made to publish quarterly and to cover a wider scope of subjects than punk rock. The last issue (now co-edited by Chris Desjardins) is a 100-page World Update with articles on music scenes in Japan and Germany, Cajun Zydeco music, interviews with film director Sam Fuller and sci-fi author Philip K. Dick, and five pages of Jimbo. Contrary to rumor, it was not the final issue, but the start of a new format.

Slash Records plans to sign some new bands (Plugz? Cramps? Blasters?), but nothing is definite. In December, Slash released an X single, ("White Girl" b/w "Your Phone's Off The Hook") and the soundtrack of an incredible documentary film called *The Decline of Western Civilization*. Produced and directed by Penelope Spheeris (whose credentials include *Saturday Night Live* and *Real Life*), the movie features wild performances by the Alice Bag Band, Black Flag, Catholic Discipline, Circle Jerks, Fear, Germs and X, complete with seething masses of gobbers and rabid bouncers. The movie captures all the raw intensity, rude humor and bitter frustration that exploded into L.A. punk rock, as well as some tragicomic looks behind the scenes. There are chilling interviews with beach punks who explain their taste for violence; an X party where the band members give each other homemade tattoos; and there is Darby Crash, the destructo diver/singer, calmly discussing the dangers of his Germs career while cooking bacon and eggs with a tarantula crawling up his arm. The Spheeris film will premiere Friday, February 13 at a theatre in Hollywood.

Despite the ongoing *Slash* projects, Kickboy has moved permanently to England with Philomena. He's got a job with Rough Trade Records and gets paid handsomely by musical trade papers in Europe for what he gives away to the ungrateful masses here. He claims he's burned out, but his latest pieces prove that, to the contrary, he's one of rock's best writers. He's promised to send articles from overseas, and he'd better.

...To hell with everything, actually: great music triggers senseless confrontations, rebellious kids become mindless troops, intelligent artists are forced into patronizing ordeals or total breakdown of normal contacts, and some of us are forced to watch what we used to participate in and wonder what the hell is going on. The death of rock 'n' roll is so overdue no one believes in it anymore, yet this sure smells like death, and a painful one at that. The agony of youth culture? Wishful thinking? Slow weaning of the teenage nation? Could this be it? Or, to put it in a most cosmic-o/mystico/daddy-o perspective: something is dying, something is being born, and they're going to claw the daylight out of each other if it goes on any longer. (Sounds of muffled trumpets as the solar system recedes into a dot.)

Kick Face
"(Still) Getting Rid of the Albatross: Public Image at the Olympic Auditorium"

by Pleasant Gehman

Happy New Year! I'm sure that by now all of you have already broken whatever sensible resolutions you may have made, but the last few days of 1980 really were cool, straight from the fridge, as they say. The ever-wonderful **GO-GO'S** sold out the **WHISKY A GO GO** four nights in a row, playing with, respectively, the **MUTANTS** from San Fran, the **GIGOLOS** and the exceptional **RAYBEATS**, who play crazed phased instrumentals, heavy on blaring sax and pulsing organ. The Raybeats are up north for the week, but they're going to be doing a couple of dates in L.A. again next week.

JOHN BELUSHI showed up for the Go-Go's/Raybeats show and fell in luv five times over with the girls. Also in attendance were **MILES COPELAND** of **IRS RECORDS**, checkin' them out, **ANDY SUMMERS** of the **POLICE**, and **NIGEL HARRISON** of **BLONDIE**, comparing bass-lines with stand-in bass-star **KATHY VALENTINE**, who took over for an ailing **MARGOT** for the shows. Highlights of the evening were the more than $40 worth of change and paper money hurled at the stage by rabid fans — and chocolate cream pies, which were served right in the face to anyone who tried to jump up on the stage and dance around.

Like a breath of fresh air from south of the border, **JOE "KING" CARRASCO** blew into town last week for two dates at the Whisky with the **TEX-TONES** (trying things out without **KATHY VALENTINE**) and the **BRAT**, a slick combo from East L.A. Carrasco also hit the **SWEETWATER** in Redondo Beach, where the whole place was dancing on the tables and swinging from the rafters — *literally*! I'm still nursing my blisters. I haven't danced that much since ... I don't remember; but whatta show, whatta band, whatta guy! **CACA DE VACA** forever!

January will be a good month for records. **MARTIAN RECORDS** has two hot ones coming out, both singles: the **VENTURES** record, which will feature "Surfin' and Spyin'," penned by the Go-Go's, complete with back-up vocals by **CHARLOTTE** and **JANE**. Also released will be the **RAMONES** and **RODNEY BINGENHEIMER** joining forces on "Surfin' Safari" and an original number entitled "Can't Kill Cruisin'."

This month, for all you historians/fanatics, **MCA** will release a 122-song, six-record **BUDDY HOLLY** compilation album. It'll probably cost ya, but every day will be a Holly Day.

LOOKIN': The **LAST** still need a rhythm guitarist — anyone interested? And the infamous **RHYTHM PIGS** are looking for a drummer. If you're kinda portcine, can beat skins like there's no tomorrow, and can keep up with **TOP JIMMY**'s liquor consumption, call **CARLOS GUITARLOS** at 222-6420. Another band being formed is the **SCHMIDLINS**. Requirements for that are kinda sketchy; just leave your name and number on any bathroom wall in town and look for a reply.

IVY AND THE EATERS broke up in December, but this month Ivy will be in the studio working on some solo things, and she's also in the process of working on a videotape of one of her most popular songs, "Working Woman," with **RICHARD RHEA**.

R.I.P. the **HONG KONG CAFE**, which is closed now, but the last night they were open was wild, featuring the **CIRCLE JERKS** and the **MAU-MAUS**.

The **PEE WEE HERMAN SHOW**, a "live pilot," will start previewing at the **GROUNDLINGS THEATRE** at 7307 Melrose Avenue at the end of this month. **PAUL RUBENS**, who plays Pee Wee, has been featured in **CHEECH & CHONG** movies and a **STEVE MARTIN** special — should be kind of interesting. Call the Groundlings for details.

The Go-Go's & Bekahh! Blues Sisters?

Shows to look forward to this week are X and the **SHEIKS OF SHAKE** at **CLUB 88** this Friday. There will be two shows that night. The **SHEIKS** will also be appearing at the **CENTRAL CLUB** this Saturday. Sunday, at everyone's favorite watering hole, **CATHAY DE GRANDE**, Railroad Productions is putting on a show with soul sisters **ELLA & THE BLACKS**, the **SPEED QUEENS** and a new group called **AFTERIMAGE**. Admission is four small ones, and the show starts at eight. Last Sunday at the Cathay, **PHRANC** played, and **LILY TOMLIN** dropped by for some action.

That seems to be it for the week.■

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